SASKATCHEWAN

SUMMIT

a new century of opportunity

Summary Report

March 2005

A NEW CENTURY OF OPPORTUNITY: WHAT WAS SAID

The first ever Saskatchewan Summit took place January 23-26, 2005, in Saskatoon and helped kick off the province's 100th anniversary celebrations. Sub-titled *A New Century of Opportunity*, the Summit provided a major forum for business, community and youth leaders to celebrate Saskatchewan's economic successes and to explore our future challenges and opportunities.

Approximately 400 leaders from across Saskatchewan and other parts of Canada participated in the Summit's general sessions and discussion groups. They heard presentations on our key economic sectors, on labour market and post-secondary education challenges and on youth entrepreneurship.

In his opening remarks, The Honourable Lorne Calvert, Premier of Saskatchewan, stated:

> "My own vision in calling this summit is that we would gather and recognize and celebrate the tremendous opportunities that exist today in the Saskatchewan economy; that we would recognize how, in just the past few years, our economy has changed, expanded and diversified.
>
> From this summit, it is my hope that we would challenge some of the negative attitudes and false perceptions that continue to exist even within our own province, never mind beyond our borders.
>
> It is my hope that we will celebrate the opportunities of our present and future.
>
> But equally, my vision for this summit is that we would not hide from identifying that which deters our economic and social progress nor hide from that which divides us nor the challenges that confront us; that in this summit we would ask ourselves and each other the tough questions that we might find new pathways to progress."

The Summit heard a lot of "plain talk" from both main stage presenters and in the breakout groups, as participants explored the challenges and opportunities facing the province and examined the role Saskatchewan's youth will play as we move through a new century.

Summit participants developed a sense of common cause for advancing Saskatchewan's significant natural strengths and tackling our challenges head on. The document that follows gives a summary of three days of discussion and presentations. The "What Was Said" sections contained in boxes throughout the document are derived from the breakout group discussions that occurred on the second day of the Summit.

WHAT WAS SAID:

The Summit was viewed as a useful and worthwhile event. However, participants made it clear that government must act and respond to suggestions from discussion groups.

> *"An excellent conference with good discussion and debate! Government asked the questions and must now be prepared to act on some of the responses and recommendations,"* stated one participant.

Speakers and participants saw a bright future for the province, but agreed that future prosperity requires the combined efforts on the part of business, government and labour working together toward common goals.

Natural Strengths Position Us for the Future

Saskatchewan has a strong resource future, according to leaders in the forestry, potash, oil and gas, wind power and diamond industries.

Saskatchewan has a strong resource future.

Saskatchewan's Shackleton gas field is significant and has increased Saskatchewan reserves by 20 per cent. Industry officials expect the field to provide significant economic benefits to provincial residents, according to **Clayton Woitas**, President of Profico Energy.

Speaking at the Summit, Kensington Resources Ltd. President and CEO **Robert McCallum** said Saskatchewan hosts the largest diamond-bearing kimberlite field in the world. Kimberlite is the diamond host rock. Saskatchewan's kimberlite fields are of a size that dwarfs all other kimberlite fields anywhere in the world. A substantial portion of this immense field is being explored and tested to determine the economic feasibility of developing a world-class diamond mine in Saskatchewan.

But gas and diamonds are not the only resources abundant in the province. Saskatchewan's potash reserves will also last at least 100 years, according to **Norm Beug**, Vice President of Potash Operations for Mosaic. However, Saskatchewan cannot simply rest on its potash laurels and must continue to develop the industry in the face of growing competition in countries closer to our export markets.

Diamonds! A kimberlite field so large that it could easily swallow up all other kimberlites in existence.

Forestry is also seen as an important resource for the province in its next century. Two of the largest, most modern oriented strandboard mills on the continent are located in Saskatchewan. **Steve Smith**, Weyerhaeuser Canada's Manager of Sustainability and Stewardship of the Canadian Forestlands, believes Saskatchewan can continue to flourish with a more global approach to business development. He also noted that forest products industry members and communities have done meaningful work in forging relationships with First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan.

The province's second century could also be its nuclear century, according to **Gerald Grandey**, President and Chief Executive Officer of Cameco Corporation. Cameco is the world's largest, low-cost uranium producer, providing almost 20 per cent of the world's uranium supply. Saskatchewan is the world's largest producer of uranium, and its reserves are estimated to be 800 million pounds with the equivalent energy of 19 billion barrels of oil. Development of a broader nuclear industry in Saskatchewan is a capital-intensive undertaking and must be evaluated in light of other energy sources in the province.

WHAT WAS SAID:

Summit participants urged the province to build on our natural strengths, but simultaneously focus attention beyond primary agriculture and the benefits of natural resources. They said we must build on our economic strengths to achieve growth through value-added processing, as well as pursue developments in science and technology, innovation, and our cultural and social sectors.

Participants agreed that robust economic growth is a real potential for Saskatchewan and suggested that the government should create an environment for that growth by making Saskatchewan a more competitive place to do business.

Examples for change from the facilitated discussions are as follows:

- Regulatory review and reform is necessary to introduce more flexibility, simplicity and consistency.
- Government must maintain a competitive royalty structure.

COMPETITIVE AT HOME AND ABROAD

Exporting is critical to the Saskatchewan economy, and a competitive business environment is essential to continued success in domestic and international markets.

Saskatchewan's research and development capacity is an advantage.

Murad Al-Katib of Saskcan Pulse Trading, near Regina, noted that Saskatchewan's research and development capacity is an advantage for his business of processing and exporting lentils. Al-Katib urged Saskatchewan agricultural producers to add value to their crops, to have an in-depth knowledge of their market potentials and to shed their fear of becoming big operations.

Keith Brown of Trailtech Industries, a trailer manufacturing company, spoke about his business choosing Gravelbourg over Lethbridge. He cited several cost advantages for establishing and expanding operations in Gravelbourg while a seemingly "better" location was available in Alberta. He noted the trade-dependent nature of the provincial economy, as well as the many opportunities to take Saskatchewan-made manufactured goods to world markets with the assistance of the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP). In talking about future challenges, Brown noted the need to maximize labour utilization and to have a business-friendly labour climate, as well as the need to enhance the manufacturing process.

Anthony Wilson-Smith, Editor-in-Chief of *Maclean's*, provided the perspective of an outsider in his remarks about Saskatchewan. He encouraged Saskatchewan to "make its voice heard" in Canada and the world. He noted that people around the globe are looking to establish themselves in "safe havens" and are not restricted by geography. Emotional factors are driving business decisions, he said, and people want clean, welcoming communities within which to establish businesses and homes.

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Todd Hirsch, Chief Economist with the Canada West Foundation, provided an economic update, noting that Saskatchewan has:

- high GDP per capita;
- a low unemployment rate;
- positive economic growth;
- a diverse economy; and
- strength in energy, mining, manufacturing growth and research.

He reinforced his message by highlighting key areas where we need to be "thinking big." He encouraged the people of Saskatchewan to be confident in the province and to not "think small."

In Saskatchewan, we have no right to think small.

Hirsch said that realizing further growth in key sectors must be a priority. He noted the focus should be introducing planned change that results in more capital investment and jobs for the long term.

Individuals who participated in the breakout sessions reiterated Hirsch's message and advanced numerous suggestions for government to consider in order to improve the business climate.

WHAT WAS SAID:

Participants at the Summit encouraged the province to focus on our competitive position creating the environment for growth within our key sectors. Noting the importance of perception, participants encouraged additional efforts to promote the advantages and opportunities of investment in Saskatchewan.

Within the facilitated discussions on **competitiveness** and **attitude**, the following themes arose:

- At home, we must be more accepting of change and continue to build a more positive attitude about Saskatchewan.
- More work needs to be done to foster a stronger entrepreneurial spirit, especially among young Saskatchewan people.
- Saskatchewan people have a lack of confidence and risk-averse attitude. This province has tons of opportunities for the future. The thing that will hold Saskatchewan back is our own people. We tend to be humble, conservative, shy, reserved.
- To demonstrate commitment to economic development, government must act on business irritants or barriers to investment and growth.
- Undertake a comprehensive business tax load review that leads to reform.

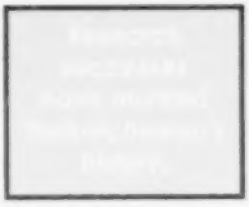
A Legacy of Innovative Products and Approaches

People from Saskatchewan are inherently entrepreneurial, innovative and hardworking. Speaker after speaker recognized that our province is fertile ground for the leading-edge research that leads to innovative product development.

Low business expenses in Saskatchewan are one competitive advantage.

Sean Frisky of Ground Effects Environmental extolled the opportunity to grow our green technology sector, citing low business expenses in Saskatchewan as one competitive advantage. He lauded the Regina-based Communities of Tomorrow as an initiative that can show all of Canada how far we can go with green technology.

Jeff Cutler, Acting Research Director at the Canadian Light Source Synchrotron, also drove home this point. In his presentation, he recalled some of the research successes that have marked Saskatchewan's history, including advances in crop varieties and crop science, veterinary and human medicine, and electronic and engineering products for world markets.



Vast opportunities lie in store for Saskatchewan and its key sectors with a research tool like the synchrotron, he said. The Canadian Light Source is a prime example of how our research and innovation agenda is attracting scientists, along with our unique cluster of health and life science agencies, and biotechnological research and development at Innovation Place and the University of Saskatchewan.

WHAT WAS SAID:

Summit participants stressed the importance of supporting innovation and the commercialization of research, building on our competitive advantages. The breakout sessions praised the work of research and development facilities here in fostering more commercialization of research. The session also noted the need to address "urban-based, university-based" R&D and its linkage (communications) with the rest of Saskatchewan (rural/regional disconnect).

- A need to address the roles of the existing research parks.
- The research parks have to be more outward looking, less like research and development fortresses – create investment linkages inside and outside of Saskatchewan.
- Need to better engage industry and increase industry expenditures on research and development.

ENGAGING MORE PEOPLE IN SASKATCHEWAN'S FUTURE

Young people are presented many opportunities in Saskatchewan.

Young people made their voices heard at the Summit on what communities, business and governments must do to make Saskatchewan an attractive place for young people. Youth leaders noted that young people are presented many opportunities in Saskatchewan but want to build careers here and not simply have jobs. **Mike Lothian** of the Provincial Youth Advisory Council emphasized the importance of mentorship and stressed that Saskatchewan companies need to compete earlier for young people graduating from Saskatchewan institutions.

Tina Svedahl of the Regina REDA Future Leaders Group spoke of the need for Saskatchewan corporations to develop succession plans and strategies to get young people into career-track positions. Svedahl also spoke to the issue of "buzz" or the lifestyle considerations that can attract or keep young people in a community. She suggested that new youth-focused campaigns similar to "I Love Regina" and "Our Future is Wide Open" be undertaken to enhance our province's youth-friendly buzz.

WHAT WAS SAID:

We must broaden our workforce and engage our youth. Business needs to take a lead role in defining its labour force requirements and work in partnership with training institutions and the government to make sure that young people are able to enter the labour force with the right skills and training to meet labour force requirements and to ensure that they may have meaningful careers in Saskatchewan.

There were two messages the participants within the **labour market** facilitated group wanted to convey:

- Labour market development needs to occur in lock-step with efforts to create a favourable environment for business and economic growth.
- Increased international immigration to Saskatchewan is essential as both a short-term supply of needed skilled labour and to increase our diversity, which is seen as important to enable Saskatchewan to do a better job of attracting and retaining young people.

Specific suggestions regarding immigrant labour sources were as follows:

- Streamline the immigration process and increase awareness of existing processes.
- Increase programming to help host communities welcome immigrants.
- Provide incentives to encourage immigration to small communities.

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Candace Wasacase-Lafferty of the University of Saskatchewan spoke of the opportunities in Saskatchewan to attract young Aboriginal people to our educational institutions and labour force. Wasacase-Lafferty emphasized that successful employers must have workplaces that value diversity and possess strategies to retain Aboriginal workers after they have been hired.

Businesses owned and operated by First Nations and Métis people are providing meaningful jobs and careers for many Aboriginal people.

The important role for Aboriginal people in the provincial economy was emphasized by **Vice-Chief Guy Lonechild** of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN). The increasing numbers of businesses owned and operated by First Nations and Métis people are providing meaningful jobs and careers for many Aboriginal people.

Doug Elliott of Sask Trends Monitor demonstrated that there is a looming labour force shortage facing Saskatchewan and all jurisdictions in North America. Elliott noted that meeting Saskatchewan's future labour force requirements means that Saskatchewan will have to do a better job of retaining and attracting young people, ensuring that young people have the training and education that the labour market needs and incorporating a growing Aboriginal population into Saskatchewan's labour force.

The leaders of our post-secondary institutions emphasized the key roles that education and training will play in meeting Saskatchewan's future labour force requirements. **Peter MacKinnon**, President of the University of Saskatchewan, pointed out that while two-thirds of U of S grads stay in Saskatchewan, we can and must do a better job of attracting students and keeping graduates here. MacKinnon suggested that student financial aid ought to be structured in a way that encourages recruitment and retention.

University of Regina President **Dr. David Barnard** stressed that economic growth occurs when the private sector, government and universities collaborate effectively. The ultimate outcome is increased economic capacity resulting from education and ideas produced by research.

Dr. Bob McCulloch, President and CEO of SIAST, pointed to the importance of providing more training to Aboriginal people and providing support for entrepreneurs and small business. He stressed the need for innovative solutions and collaboration across sectors.

Dr. McCulloch pointed to several examples of explorations into such issues as Aboriginal student support and closer integration between post-secondary and the K to 12 school system. He also discussed the need for expanding access to skills and technical training through distance education, e-learning and partnerships within the post-secondary system.

Dr. Eber Hampton, President of the First Nations University of Canada, said that while increasing Aboriginal participation rates is necessary to meet future labour force requirements, doing so will require a concerted effort and a real change in our practices.

Bob Guthrie, CEO of the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, talked about the fundamental importance of work as human interaction and emphasized the importance of linking education to jobs while imparting the skills and experiences of older workers to young workers.

WHAT WAS SAID:

Education and training are essential elements to Saskatchewan's future. Government should make this a priority, especially as it relates to our young Aboriginal population. Participants thought in particular that students need better career development services and that an effort should be made to "glamorize the trades." As well, maximizing our youth advantage in the Aboriginal population is essential for success.

Within the First Nations and Métis **opportunities and challenges** discussion group, the following dominated discussion:

- The challenge to attract and retain good teachers to the First Nations reserves, especially technical teachers (i.e. science and math teachers).
- Aboriginal people want input in curriculum and in setting relevancy of topics in question (balance).
- Standards for on-reserve – noted that they were not up to the same standard as off-reserve.
- It's more than education – **it is an interconnected triangle**: social, economic, education – must look at all three elements; they cannot be separated. These all impact on kids staying in school.
- Government needs to provide options for removing barriers and helping to strengthen First Nations and Métis participation in the economy as successful entrepreneurs and business owners by enhancing mentoring opportunities along with youth entrepreneurship programming, particularly outside urban areas.

Healthy and Sustainable Living

The importance of good environmental stewardship was referenced a number of times during the course of the Summit. Saskatchewan people are no strangers to this through the sustainable agriculture and forestry practices we have used for much of our first century. How well we continue to manage as environmental stewards will be one of the measures of our progress in our second century.

Wind power will be an important energy source.

The Summit heard from Enbridge Wind Power President **Chuck Szmurlo** that wind power is a resource of our future: a key natural Saskatchewan resource that will provide many environmental, economic and energy security benefits. He predicted that wind power will be an important energy source for the next 100 years.

Participants picked up on the green and healthy environment theme during the breakout sessions. And as **Sean Frisky** of Ground Effects Environmental demonstrated, there are many opportunities for young entrepreneurs to develop careers and leading-edge products and services in this area for larger markets.

There are many opportunities for young entrepreneurs to develop careers

Opportunities for a New Century – The Way Ahead

The Summit closed with wrap-up remarks by **the Honourable Eric Cline, Minister of Industry and Resources**. He cited the excellent presentations and the forthright observations of speakers and participants alike.

He noted the optimism about the province's potential and the pride in its past and present successes that were displayed by many participants, perhaps most notably **Her Honour the Honourable Dr. Lynda Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan**. "Our power actually lies right here in our little corner of the world. Billions around the globe cannot even imagine the benefits of our present, let alone the potential of our future."

"This summit has been about our future... We seek solutions. We want to move forward... to build a province for the next generation," stated Minister Cline.

The Summit will help inform the development of a new economic development strategy for the province and will influence the direction of upcoming and future provincial budgets. In addition to immediate policy responses, there will be new initiatives developed as part of long-term planning in government.

Government of
Saskatchewan